

# Media Writing I

JRSM 1750-M50

Fall 2022

Virtual/Asynchronous

Canvas

## Prof. Dana Albright, M.A.

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**Office Hours:** Virtual, by appointment

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Introduction to grammar and writing style for use in journalism and mass communication media; foundations of research and information gathering, media literacy and plagiarism.

### Prerequisites

None

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Miller, T. I., & Kessler, L. (2016). *When words collide: A Media Writer's Guide to grammar and style*. Cengage Learning.

Associated Press Stylebook, 56th edition or online access at <https://www.apstylebook.com>

### Classroom format

This course teaches the basic skills of writing and grammar. Sometimes, this will be a review for you. Other times, this will address new material. Weekly quizzes will coincide with each chapter. Students may take quizzes twice. The highest score will be recorded.

Assignment instructions and all deadlines are posted on Canvas at the beginning of the semester. There are no surprises. Students are expected to follow instructions and submit work on time.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page: <http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the published course list, click on the link for JRSM 1750 to enter the course and read the instructions on the welcome page.
4. Please do not use the internal Canvas email system on the course web page. Use your regular University of Memphis email to correspond with me at [dpaisley@memphis.edu](mailto:dpaisley@memphis.edu)

## Course Requirements

- Exercises and writing assignments to be completed via Canvas.
- Weekly Quizzes
- Final news story

## Grading

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%

B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%

C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%

D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%

F 0-59.4%

## Grade Breakdown

In-class Assignments: 25%

Quizzes: 25%

Writing Assignments: 30%

News story and story rewrite (WA5 and 6): 20%

## Other issues

This course is essential to your success in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. It builds the grammatical skills necessary for clear and effective writing. Although some of these concepts might seem elementary to a university student, a perfected sense of grammar is essential in our profession.

Audio and video lectures coincide with the assigned textbook chapters. You must take the time to read the book and be prepared to study the online content. These assignments, along with instructions and examples of how to successfully complete them, are available in Canvas on the first day of class.

None of the assignments should be particularly difficult, but waiting until the last minute to get started on them is not advised.

**DEADLINES:** Unless otherwise specified, all assignment deadlines are Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Deadlines for this course are firm and posted from the first day of the semester. All work must be turned in via Canvas.

**LATE WORK:** I will not accept late work, except for extenuating circumstances. Any revised deadline must be approved by me prior to posted deadlines.

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT:** Computers and network access can be finicky. However, tech problems are not an acceptable reason for missing deadlines. As a University of Memphis student, you are entitled to help from the IT helpdesk. It is in your best interest to call the helpdesk as soon as you are aware of the problem. There are two ways to access the University of Memphis IT helpdesk: call (901) 678-8888, or log in to the website ([umhelpdesk.memphis.edu](http://umhelpdesk.memphis.edu)) to open a service ticket.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Unit One: Writing with Accuracy and Precision

#### *Week 1 (Aug. 22 – 28) Course Introduction*

Course Intro, Best Practices and Writing Tips

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 1-2 Assignments: A Short Description

1.1: Welcome and Introductions, Why Grammar Matters

1.2: 8 Parts of Speech, 10 Secrets to Writing Well

#### *Week 2 (Aug. 29 – Sept. 4): Seeking Clarity*

Sentence Structure & You

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 3-4 Assignments: Quiz 1, Other Grammatical Terms

2.1: Clarity & Composition

2.2: Verbs and how to Use them

#### *Week 3 (Sept. 5 – 11): Maximum Verbiage*

Nouns & Pronouns

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 5 Assignments: Quiz 2, Types of Pronouns, Rules of Agreement

3.1: Expanding your Repertoire

#### *Week 4 (Sept. 12 – 18): Sentence Building Blocks, Part I*

Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs

Reading Kessler, Ch. 6 Assignments: Quiz 3, Quiz 4, Verb Exercise, Parts of Speech

4.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 1

4.2: Coming to a Subject-Verb Agreement

#### *Week 5 (Sept. 19 – 25): Sentence Building Blocks, Part II*

Punctuation & Powering Your Sentences

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 7 Assignments: Quiz 5, Quiz 6, Review So Far, Rules of Modification & Unity

5.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 2

5.2: Punctuation and Powering Your Sentences

#### *Week 6 (Sept. 26 – Oct. 2): Sentence Building Blocks, Part III*

Putting It All Together: Prepositions. Conjunctions. Interjections. Sentences and Syntax.

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 8 Assignments: Quiz 7, Quiz 8, Recognizing Prepositional Phrases, Conjunctions

6.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 3

6.2: Word Choice

#### *Week 7 (Oct. 3 – 9): Breathing Life Into Your Words*

Style, Substance & Appealing to the Senses in Writing.

Readings: Kessler, Ch. 9 Assignments: Quiz 9, Quiz 10, Grammar True & False

7.1: Common Grammar Pitfalls

7.2: Giving Power to your Words

## Unit Two: Preparing for Media Writing

### *Week 8 (Oct. 10 – 16): Fall Break*

No class October 10

Reviews and Redos October 12. Assignments: Replacement Quiz

8.1: Review & Redo Opportunity

### *Week 9 (Oct. 17 – 23): Making the News*

News Judgment & The Elements of Newsworthiness.

Assignments: Writing Assignment 1, Writing Assignment 2

9.1: The Elements of Newsworthiness & Where News Comes From

9.2: Anatomy of a News Article & News Judgment

### *Week 10 (Oct. 24 – 30): News Summary Leads*

News summary leads.

Assignments: Writing Assignment 3

10.1: Writing News Summary Leads

10.2: Even More News Summary Leads

### *Week 11 (Oct. 31 – Nov. 6): What's Good Information?*

Source Types. Information Gathering. Media Literacy.

Assignments: Writing Assignment 4

11.1: Sourcing & You

11.2: Your Media Diet

### *Week 12 (Nov. 7 – 13): Direct quotes*

Interviewing. Introduction to quoting expert sources. News story assigned. Watch video/lecture.

Assignments: Writing Assignment 5

12.1: Introduction to Quoting Expert Sources

12.2: Final Writing Assignment Discussion

## Unit Three: Practice

### *Week 13 (Nov. 14 – 20): News story*

Making Your Story Happen

Assignments: Writing Assignment 6

13.1: Class devoted to "The Pitch"

13.2: Sources Follow-up

### *Week 14 (Nov. 21 – 27): Editing/Rewriting*

Editing and rewriting news stories. Rewrite assigned. In-class editing workshops.

Editing/Rewriting Assignment

Story Return Discussion

14.1: Editing and Rewriting

*Week 15 (Nov. 28 - 30): Story rewrites due.*

Assignment: Writing Assignment 6 (Revision).

15.1: Final Review

15.2: Story Deadline

Last day of classes: Wednesday, November 30

Study Day: Thursday, December 1

**NO WORK ACCEPTED AFTER SUNDAY, DEC. 4!**

## **ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES**

### **Professional values and competencies for JRSM 1750**

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, both in a global context and in the United States.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

### **How professional values and competencies will be met**

*Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)*

- Develop advanced understanding of grammar as used in mass communication.
- Establish a working knowledge of Associated Press style.
- Understand media language respectful of a diverse audience.
- Critically examine the language used in media as persuasive and communicative.
- Distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Expand knowledge of the resources available for communications professionals.

*Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)*

- Examination of grammar skills specific to journalism and mass communication
- Examination of Associated Press writing style
- Examination of understanding of current events
- Examination of research techniques and available resources.

### **How assessment of student learning will be met**

*Awareness*

- Becoming aware of specific language for journalism and mass communication.

#### *Understanding*

- Use of grammar and style to communicate clearly, precisely and succinctly.

#### *Application*

- Passage of examinations concerning grammar, style, AP preferences and basic information-gathering skills.

## **JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES**

### **Portfolio requirement**

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or SquareSpace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files and writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

### **Email**

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

### **Electronic devices**

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

### **Attendance**

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

### **Course repetition**

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

### **Academic integrity**

In addition to University-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media class, students are expected to comply with copyright law and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

### **Online SETEs**

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIs and email passwords; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

### **AP Style and grammar**

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

### **Disability and accommodations**

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Media reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

### **Weather policy**

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the University is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day’s work.

### **Student support**

Student who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.

### **COVID-19 protocols**

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they need to notify the Dean of Students Office at [deanofstudents@memphis.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@memphis.edu) and notify the University of their result. Faculty are expected to be accommodating with extra time for assignments; however, decisions will vary on a case-by-case basis according to the severity of the student’s illness. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, students are encouraged to wear



masks indoors, wash hands frequently and wipe down their workstations with sanitizing wipes before and after class.